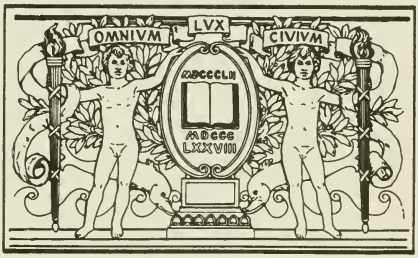

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THE TRUE PHILOSOPHER

"THE TEASING ATTENTIONS OF ELEVEN YOUNG POLES"

THE TRUE PHILOSOPHER

AND OTHER CAT TALES

BY

PEGGY BACON

ILLUSTRATED WITH ETCHINGS BY THE AUTHOR

BOSTON
THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY
1919

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The Four Seas Press
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

CONTENTS

	Page
The True Philosopher and His Cat	9
A Tooth for a Tooth	16
The Queen's Cat	22
Catnip and Catnap	28
The Patrimony	34
The Aegis of the Gods	37
The Self Made Kitten	42
The Kitten's Tailor	47
Scat	52

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"The Teasing Attentions of Eleven Young Poles" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Facing Page

"Lay Back and Shut His Eyes Wearily" . . 14
"Did All the Cleverest Things to Peoples' Mouths" 16
"Earnestly Exhorting the Cook to Protect Isabella" 18
"Planting the Other in the Poached Eggs" 24
"A Smile Tangled Somewhere in His Long Beard" 26
"An Old Lady Who Lived Alone With Her Parrot" 30
"A Large House Full of Parents, Nurses and Children" 32
"Of Course They All Wanted the Cat" . . 34
"Through the Long Corridors" 40
"Kidnapped Him Accordingly" 44
"He and the Kitten Went to Live in the Grocery Store" 52
"Stoutly Maintained With Tears in Her Eyes" 54

DEDICATED

TO

DUFF, BRITA AND SIAM

THE TRUE PHILOSOPHER

THE TRUE PHILOSOPHER AND HIS CAT

ONCE there was a philosopher and he had nothing in the whole world but his cat and his philosophy. He had pawned his last book and eaten his last batter-cake and been ejected by his last landlady; so tucking his cat under his arm in a position which he and the cat knew to be comfortable, he started bravely off down the king's high-way, and being a young philosopher he whistled a tune.

It was early May, and the daffodils and hyacinths were out in the gardens he passed, and the violets were out by the wayside, and all the fruit-trees in all the land were in blossom, so he did not feel nearly so destitute as one would have supposed, for who could be lonely or sad when the birds were singing and the sun shining on a sweet and balmy morning? Besides, his cat was a fat one and his philosophy genuine so he really had something after all.

They had journeyed some time and it was just high noon, when a coach rolled up and stopped abreast of them. Out bounced a stout gentleman in gorgeous attire who accosted the philosopher.

"I," he said with an air, "am the Lord High Chamberlain!"

"And I," replied the young man with a smile, "am a philosopher," for he disliked so much importance.

"That is beside the mark," said the Lord Chamberlain testily. "You have a cat. It appears to be a pure white cat. Is it?"

"Yes," replied the philosopher proudly, "it is absolutely pure white,—not a single hair of any color whatsoever."

"*And* it has a black nose."

"Yes, and the loveliest forget-me-not blue eyes. Look up, beloved, and show the gentleman your eyes." But beloved felt dozy and would not look up.

"His eyes are of no importance whatever," pursued the Lord High Chamberlain in a sweeping way. "But the King is ill—at least he does not feel quite well, and the doctor has prescribed the heart of a pure white cat with a black nose. Now all the cats with black noses seem sure to have a few black hairs somewhere, and all the pure white cats have *pink* noses, so the King has offered for such a cat a very large reward—in fact, the hand of the princess in marriage and the kingdom after his death. Now what do you say to that!" cried the Lord High Chamberlain triumphantly.

The philosopher looked up at the pretty face of the princess gazing down at him bashfully but favoringly from the coach window. Then he looked down at his cat and sighed.

"I fear it is impossible," he said looking at the

princess again wistfully. And as the jaw of the Chamberlain dropped he added hastily in explanation, "You see my cat needs his heart; and I need my cat—in short, I simply couldn't part with my cat."

"Do you mean to say you will forfeit a brilliant career for the sake of a cat?" exclaimed the Lord Chamberlain aghast.

"Oh, but it isn't just any cat!" cried the young man. "He's been my companion for years and years, and we have always been the best of friends." The cat looked up and purred. "And now I really couldn't treat him this way after all we've been through together. He's all I have in the world except my philosophy," he added.

"He may be all you have in the world just now, but you'd have a very great fortune if you gave him up," reasoned the Lord High Chamberlain.

"I simply couldn't consider it!" declared the philosopher stoutly.

"But if the cat is all you have in the world, how do you propose to live?" cried the Lord High Chamberlain desperately, for he did not dare return to the king without the requisite cat, and besides he saw the princess beginning to cry.

"Oh!" returned the philosopher. "We shall live very happily, I assure you. I am extremely busy at present attempting to pursue a course of reasoning along lines I have never tried before. To tell the truth, I am endeavoring to build up a philosophy of my own that

will include all other philosophies and supply all their deficiencies. I assure you it is intensely interesting. For example—" he was going on, warmed to his subject, but the Lord High Chamberlain interrupted him impatiently.

"I wish to know how you expect to live! Even philosophers must eat, I take it, and cats certainly must."

"Why yes, of course we will eat," said the philosopher, puzzled, "but it is not lunch time yet. I make it a rule never to eat between meals. It disturbs the mental processes."

"But when it is lunch time, what will you do? And when it is supper time what will you do? And what will you do for breakfast tomorrow?" shouted the exasperated man.

"Do—" repeated the young man still more puzzled, "Why we will eat of course, what do you do at meal times?"

But at this moment a messenger came riding up on horseback and drew rein before the chamberlain.

"The King," he announced loudly, "has quarrelled with his doctor and called in another who declares that all the king really needs to make him perfectly well and happy is five minutes talk with a true philosopher. You are to procure him one immediately and bring it home with you. The same reward is offered."

"I think we have one here," sighed the Lord High Chamberlain. "No one but a true philosopher could

be so indifferent to his diet. Will you kindly step into the coach, sir, and we will drive to the palace?"

So the philosopher got in with his cat and took his seat by the princess, who dried her eyes and looked very happy, and they all drove to the palace.

"Are you the true philosopher?" said the King. "Talk to me!" And he lay back and shut his eyes wearily.

"What is the matter with you?" said the philosopher, stroking the cat and eyeing the king mildly.

"The doctor says that my disease demands five minutes talk with a true philosopher. He diagnosed it in no other way. Begin!"

"In that case there cannot be much the matter with you," observed the philosopher.

"Oh, it does not *sound* as if I were very ill!" quoth the king with the air of a martyr.

"You look very well indeed," said the philosopher.

"Oh?" cried the king, "I don't *look* so ill!"

"Well, are you ill?" asked the philosopher skeptically.

"Of course I am!" said the king, haughtily. "Very ill!"

"I don't believe it!" declared the philosopher.

The king opened his eyes and demanded, "Why?"

"Because," began the philosopher with an air of one following out a logical course of reasoning, "you look perfectly well, you sound perfectly well, and what

would there be to make you ill? Have you not everything? Are you not quite happy?"

"Happy?" repeated the king, vaguely.

"Why, yes," pursued the philosopher. "You have a nice palace, an attractive garden, a comfortable bed, a good cook, a pretty daughter, a prosperous kingdom, and a splendid digestion,—or so the doctor says. Of course you are happy; and if you are happy, it stands to reason you are well; and if you are well, you cannot be ill."

"Very true," said the king, thoughtfully, "I have all the things you say,—so of course I must be happy, —and if I am happy—of course I am well—because I would not be happy if I were not well; and if I am well—I am not ill,—that would be ridiculous. Are the five minutes up?"

The five minutes proved to be up, and as the king assured the philosopher he felt "quite convalescent" they went downstairs to lay the plans for the wedding.

"And what will you do for an observatory?" said the king, who had rather confused ideas about philosophers.

"Dear me," cried his future son-in-law, "all a philosopher needs is a garret."

"Well now," said the king, with a troubled frown, "you are asking a very difficult thing of me, for I never heard of a garret in the palace, though we might fit one up in one of the towers. But I think the best

"LAY BACK AND SHUT HIS EYES WEARILY"

thing would be to erect one on the roof, and then it would be comfortable and conveniently near."

"Oh, pray do not bother about a garret, if it is so difficult," cried the philosopher hastily. "What I would really like more than anything would be a library."

"Well, that you shall have!" replied the king, very much relieved. And he immediately put the philosopher in complete possession of a very large one indeed filled with globes, maps, easy-chairs, writing-desks, waste-baskets, and paper-cutters, and at least one copy of every book, manuscript and inscription that had ever existed in the world. Here the philosopher and his cat immediately and delightedly installed themselves, whence the former was with difficulty dislodged for the wedding, having indeed to be reminded four times to go and get dressed for the occasion. But after that was over and he and the princess were happily settled, he managed to spend most of his time there. And upon the decease of the old king, letting the affairs of state slide into the hands of his wife, who thoroughly enjoyed such things, he retired for good and all into his sanctum where, with his cat on his knee and a book in his hand, he pursued a philosophical train of thought almost without interruption from that time to his dying day.

A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH

ONCE there was an excellent dentist who did all the cleverest things to people's mouths. He did them so ingeniously that he soon became rich; but he was an idealist, much exalted by the grandeur of his mission, and continued to work as hard as ever, starting early, stopping late, drilling and filling all day long. If any one had told him that he slaved the year round for the purpose of supporting a fat, lazy cat in luxury and idleness, he would have denied it hotly; but so, in fact, it was; for being a bachelor of an affectionate and self-abnegating nature with no relative on whom to clamp his devotion, his cat, Isabella, had come to be the idol of his heart and its comfort the aim of his life. It is not possible, of course, to spend as much money on a cat as on a wife; but the dentist did his best, and the bills of the milkman and veterinary were always the largest.

The dentist lived in a comfortable suburban villa with colored glass in the front door, a bronze group in the parlor, and a back-yard where Isabella and the week's wash were wont to take the air. Unfortunately for Isabella, the privacy of the yard was insecure against the trespassings of neighboring cats; and yet

"DID ALL THE CLEVEREST THINGS TO PEOPLES' MOUTHS"

more unfortunately, Isabella's second teeth had never made their appearance. Though a couple of back teeth on either side of her jaw sufficed her nicely for a diet that consisted of milk, minces, custards, fish, sweetbreads and eggnogs, they proved unhandy and ineffectual as weapons of war; and the dentist's rest was often broken by precautionary trips, false alarms, and necessary midnight rescues.

Among these back-yard marauders so abhorred and dreaded by Isabella and the dentist, were three that inspired them with special feelings of panic and hatred. Not knowing their natal names, we will, in describing them, make use of the opprobrious ones with which the dentist, for the sake of vilification, christened them. Judas, a treacherous maltese with a tail like a lance and a slimy grey coat that fitted as suavely as a union suit, would creep up warily when Isabella lay blinking in the sunshine or dozing in the moonlight, and suddenly let out an awful hiss; whereat Isabella would leap as high as her fat would let her and the fight would begin. For such combats there would have been for Isabella no issue in this world, had not the dentist invariably arrived in time.

Nero was a stout, yellow brute, with arrogant whiskers and greedy, round eyes; he always growled loudest at the ash can, and would bound savagely towards Isabella who fled at the sight of him. At such times, also, the dentist's advent was the only solution.

The last of the terrible trio was Clytemnestra,

black as Erebus, who would flatten her ears, look Isabella between the eyes and advance in deadly sidesteps, while that helpless feline would crouch hypnotized with horror. These and many more were a thorn in the side of the dentist and a whole bramble-bush to his pet.

The dentist's diary declares that it was on the twelfth of November that Isabella lost her last first tooth—or perhaps it might be more accurate to say her first and last tooth, since she never cut any more,—and since the fall of that invaluable fragment of herself, Isabella and the dentist had not ceased their war against the invaders, neither had the latter's sleep become less uncertain. The summer had now arrived, and the dentist, finding himself almost too tired to fill and quite too tired to pull, determined to extend his customary vacation from ten days to two weeks, and accordingly, in the hottest of the hot weather, when pajamas and ice water had no effect at all, the dentist, carrying a fat, brown hand-bag, backed himself off the stoop, earnestly exhorting the cook to protect Isabella.

Now the cook had a follower, not the kind that drone dully in the kitchen, nor the kind that hang over palings in honeyed converse, but a gay and gallant escort who wore a diamond ring and a flowered neck-tie, and who, during the dentist's absence, took Bridget walking every afternoon and conducted her to the movies every evening. Wherefore it came to

"EARNESTLY EXHORTING THE COOK TO PROTECT ISABELLA"

pass that upon the dentist's return a very disheveled Isabella stepped to meet him in a very syncopated way, and the cook could make no explanation, albeit calling the saints to witness that she had not let the blessed beast out of her sight.

Upon examination, the wounds proved to be a severe bite in the left hind-leg, one equally severe in the right fore-leg, two nicks in the ear, a long brown scratch down the nose, and a bare pink area on the tail. Horrified, the master summoned the veterinary who bandaged Isabella, while the dentist retired at once into his office where he might have been seen till two o'clock in the morning immersed in a stout volume bearing the laconic title: "Jaws."

For the ensuing week, the dentist utilized all his spare moments in making difficult researches in Isabella's mouth, drawing little diagrams, and even attempted a wax impression—a project that failed utterly for too many reasons to enumerate. During that period so full of trial for both Isabella and her master, the latter came to the conclusion that human dentistry was a sinecure and the most panicky human patient an easy problem,—"Isabella, you are not a patient—you are an impatient!" he declared one day when that animal had cleverly contrived to bite two of his fingers with those remote back teeth. But he persevered courageously, and produced by the end of the week a very pretty little enamel set of pointed false teeth, peculiarly adapted to Isabella's masticationary and

martial needs, and having two couple of dangerous fighting tusks rather longer and sharper than those of the normal cat. "Thank heaven, I learned to etherize!" ejaculated he, and capturing Isabella, he bore her to his office.

In Isabella's mouth, aside from the above-mentioned back ones, were several insignificant little teeth, beady and abortive, appearing through the gums here and there like grains upon an imperfect ear of corn; and it was to these that the dentist riveted his bridge, Isabella unconscious as the Sleeping Beauty. The measurements, though taken by stealth, proved exact, the calculation just, and the fit precise. It was a neat job, and the dentist was delighted.

Not having had any teeth for some time, it took Isabella a short while to learn their management. In fact, the first thing she did on regaining consciousness was to bite her tongue deeply. This happened again when she lapped her milk and ate her dinner, her tongue being accustomed to roam about her mouth untramelled and in safety. When she washed her face, she sometimes scratched her paw on the military tusks; but she soon got control of her new acquisitions, and it was noticed how effectively she marshalled them against her back-yard enemies.

Them she quelled at once,—Judas, Clytemnestra, Nero,—taking whole mouthfuls at a time to the infinite ecstasy of the dentist, who, wreathed in smiles, would view their vanquishment from the office window. In-

deed, she proved herself the doughtiest of them all, owing chiefly, perhaps, to her master's unctious labors over those extra long fangs, on which she was wont victoriously to impale her opponents. She did not, however, confine their use to warfare, frequently brandishing them against mankind in token of her displeasure or resentment. And if sometimes Isabella's disposition strikes the caller, cook, or grocer's boy—never the dentist—as less agreeable than of yore, sooth, it was the power to bite and not the will that had previously been lacking.

THE QUEEN'S CAT

ONCE there was a great and powerful king who was as good as gold and as brave as a lion, but he had one weakness, which was a horror of cats. If he saw one through an open window he shuddered so that his medals jangled together and his crown fell off; if anyone mentioned a cat at table he instantly spilled his soup all down the front of his ermine; and if by any chance a cat happened to stroll into the audience chamber, he immediately jumped onto his throne, gathering his robes around him and shrieking at the top of his lungs.

Now this king was a bachelor and his people didn't like it; so being desirous of pleasing them, he looked around among the neighboring royal families and hit upon a very sweet and beautiful princess, whom he asked in marriage without any delay, for he was a man of action.

Her parents giving their hearty consent, the pair were married at her father's palace; and after the festivities were over, the king sped home to see to the preparation of his wife's apartments. In due time she arrived bringing with her a cat. When he saw her mounting the steps with the animal under her arm,

the King, who was at the door to meet her, uttering a horrid yell, fell in a swoon and had to be revived with spirits of ammonia. The courtiers hastened to inform the queen of her husband's failing, and when he came to, he found her in tears.

"I cannot exist without a cat!" she wept.

"And I, my love," replied the King, "cannot exist with one!"

"You must learn to bear it!" said she.

"You must learn to live without it!" said he.

"But life would not be worth living without a cat!" she wailed.

"Well, well, my love, we will see what we can do," sighed the King.

"Suppose," he went on, "you kept it in the round tower over there. Then you could go to see it."

"Shut up my cat that has been used to running around in the open air?" cried the Queen. "Never!"

"Suppose," suggested the King again, "we made an inclosure for it of wire netting."

"My dear," cried the Queen, "A good strong cat like mine could climb out in a minute."

"Well," said the King once more, "suppose we give it the palace roof, and I will keep out of the way."

"That is a good scheme," said his wife, drying her eyes.

And they immediately fitted up the roof with a cushioned shelter, and a bed of catnip, and a bench where the Queen might sit. There the cat was left;

and the Queen went up three times a day to feed it, and twice as many times to visit it, and for almost two days that seemed the solution of the problem. Then the cat discovered that by making a spring to the limb of an overhanging oak tree, it could climb down the trunk and go where it liked. This it did, making its appearance in the throne-room, where the King was giving audience to an important ambassador. Much to the amazement of the latter, the monarch leapt up screaming, and was moreover so upset, that the affairs of state had all to be postponed till the following day. The tree was, of course, cut down; and the next day the cat found crawling down the gutter to be just as easy, and jumped in the window while the court was at breakfast. The King scrambled onto the breakfast table, skillfully overturning the cream and the coffee with one foot, while planting the other in the poached eggs, and wreaking untold havoc among the teacups. Again the affairs of state were postponed while the gutter was ripped off the roof, to the fury of the head gardener, who had just planted his spring seeds in the beds around the palace walls. Of course the next rain washed them all away.

This sort of thing continued. The wistaria vine which had covered the front of the palace for centuries, was ruthlessly torn down, the trellises along the wings soon followed; and finally an ancient grape arbor had perforce to be removed as it proved a sure means of descent for that invincible cat. Even then, he clever-

"PLANTING THE OTHER IN THE POACHED EGGS"

ly utilised the balconies as a ladder to the ground; but by this time the poor King's nerves were quite shattered and the doctor was called in. All he could prescribe was a total abstinence from cat; and the Queen, tearfully finding a home for her pet, composed herself to live without one. The King, well cared for, soon revived and was himself again, placidly conducting the affairs of state, and happy in the society of his beloved wife. Not so the latter.

Before long it was noticed that the Queen grew wan, was often heard to sniff, and seen to wipe her eyes, would not eat, could not sleep,—in short, the doctor was again called in.

"Dear, dear," he said disconsolately, combing his long beard with his thin fingers. "This is a difficult situation indeed. There must not be a cat on the premises, or the King will assuredly have nervous prostration. Yet the Queen must have a cat or she will pine quite away with nostalgia."

"I think I had best return to my family," sobbed the poor Queen, dejectedly. "I bring you nothing but trouble, my own."

"That is impossible, my dearest love," said the King decidedly—"Here my people have so long desired me to marry, and now that I am at last settled in the matrimonial way, we must not disappoint them. They enjoy a Queen so much. It gives them something pretty to think about. Besides, my love, I am attached to you, myself, and could not possibly manage with-

out you. No, my dear, there may be a way out of our difficulties, but that certainly is not it." Having delivered which speech the King lapsed again into gloom, and the doctor who was an old friend of the King's went away sadly.

He returned, however, the following day with a smile tangled somewhere in his long beard. He found the King sitting mournfully by the Queen's bedside.

"Would your majesty," began the doctor, turning to the Queen, "object to a cat that did not look like a cat?"

"Oh, no," cried she, earnestly, "just so it's a *cat!*"

"Would your majesty," said the doctor again, turning to the king, "object to a cat that did not look like a cat?"

"Oh, no," cried he, "just so it doesn't *look* like a cat!"

"Well," said the doctor beaming, "I have a cat that is a cat and that doesn't look any more like a cat than a skillet, and I should be only too honored to present it to the Queen if she would be so gracious as to accept it."

Both the King and the Queen were overjoyed and thanked the doctor with tears in their eyes. So the cat—for it was a cat though you never would have known it—arrived and was duly presented to the Queen who welcomed it with open arms and felt better immediately.

"A SMILE TANGLED SOMEWHERE IN HIS LONG BEARD"

It was a thin, wiry, long-legged creature, with no tail at all, and large ears like sails, a face like a lean isosceles triangle with the nose as a very sharp apex, eyes small and yellow like flat bone buttons, brown fur short and coarse, and large floppy feet. It had a voice like a steam siren and its name was Rosamund.

The King and Queen were both devoted to it; she because it was a cat, he because it seemed anything but a cat. No one indeed could convince the King that it was not a beautiful animal, and he had made for it a handsome collar of gold and amber—"To match," he said, sentimentally, "its lovely eyes." In sooth so ugly a beast never had such a pampered and luxurious existence, certainly never so royal a one. Appreciating its wonderful good fortune, it never showed any inclination to depart; and the King, the Queen, and Rosamund lived happily ever after.

CATNIP AND CATNAP

ONCE there were brothers, Catnip and Catnap, as different as kittens can be, for Catnip was all enthusiasm and energy, Catnap all calm somnolence. The latter was devoted to sleep, and next to sleep he loved sleepiness, and next to sleepiness, peace. He loved the hollows of chairs, the cushions of sofas, the laps of humans. He loved to be stroked, scratched under the chin and combed, for all this could continue while he slept; but anything that tended to disturb his slumbers was hateful and inexcusable, the only legitimate interruption being food, which was brought to him in a pretty bowl inscribed with the legend "For a Good Cat", by a devoted human hand.

Catnip, on the contrary, played ceaselessly with every small object that came his way, tossing it in the air, rolling over on it, chasing it, biting it, kicking it, and lavishing upon it all his exuberant attentions. In the face of his tireless energy every obstacle was overcome,—plates fell from the pantry shelf, pitchers flooded the kitchen with their milky contents, and precious vases crashed to the hearth-stone, while Catnip, perched upon the mantelpiece, surveyed with animation the rebounding fragments. Never was he

lazy, never idle! When he could find nothing better to do, he would dash furiously round the room, sharpening his claws in the rug, plucking madly at the rush-bottom chairs, savagely gnawing the table-legs, so that not a piece of furniture in the house but bore the marks of his prowess. And when Catnip grew weary, as he now and then did, he would stop short in the midst of his labors, roll himself with sudden violence into a tight, hard ball, and fall instantly into an immoderate sleep, so that far from appearing reposeful, he seemed as concentrated and busy as ever.

Destruction incidental to Catnip's presence was such that his mistress, deciding to find a good home for him elsewhere, recommended him to a neighboring farmer as a lively kitten with the promise of a good mouser. The farmer, saying that he would take Catnip to accommodate, bore him off in a covered basket. And as the kitten grew to cathood, a good mouser he certainly proved for he applied himself vigorously to the barn, pantry and cellar, continuing a strenuous persecution, till, an annihilator of hosts, he had entirely rid the farm of rodents. His master was delighted and thought that here indeed was a treasure. Unfortunately, as the game grew scarcer, Catnip, to whom constant activity was necessary, employed his superfluous vitality in killing the little chickens. And though his attitude was sportsmanlike, for he never ate his prey, this fact carried little weight with the farmer, who callously passed him on to a spinster in search of a pet.

This lady had long desired a comfortable house-cat, fond of the fireside, willing to play with paper and string, ready for mice if mice there were,—in short, the creator of an atmosphere and a responsive object of affection. Catnip, however, was far too ambitious and enterprising to accept the life of indolence prescribed by his new mistress, and became engrossed in hunting big game, often disappearing for days at a time in pursuit of the savage woodchuck. These absences caused his mistress much anxiety; but just as she was mourning his probable demise, her dishevelled darling would wander in and submit with smothered irritation to her delighted greetings. When home he busied himself in many ways, chiefly in killing birds, chipmunks and frogs, all of which he deposited in the drawing room in a disgusting state of mutilation. The spinster realized that Catnip was not exactly the type of feline that she had hoped for; but as he was vivacious and entertaining, with many winsome ways, she relinquished her ideal in his favor. And it was not until he laid at her feet a half-dead garter-snake, that she decided that all was over between them.

Catnip's next home was with an old lady who lived alone with her parrot; but he killed the parrot, and was immediately transferred to a large house full of parents, nurses and children. But here he made himself unpopular by an inability to distinguish between mice which were mice and mice which were white

" AN OLD LADY WHO LIVED ALONE WITH HER PARROT"

mice. He was given to the grocer, but that worthy complained laconically that "he was always nosing around," and presented him to the hardware man. Life among the hardware seemed colorless to Catnip, who soon ran away and wandered from place to place, finally falling in with a large Polish family who lived in a dirty little house at the end of Nowhere. Here he remained, and was, in fact, well received, for there were no dishes to break, no rival pets to slay, no preconceived notions of what a cat should be, and marauding offended no sensibilities. Catnip himself was perfectly satisfied with conditions here, for there was a little food every day, plenty of game in the nearby woods, and much to occupy him in eluding the teasing attentions of eleven young Poles. And here we will leave him and turn to his brother.

Catnap—O, but what ever happened to Catnap?—Sing, Muse, of his lethargic mornings on the guest-room bed, and of his comatose afternoons on the lounge! Sing of his succulent diet of cereals, cream, fish and custards! Sing of his beautiful face so fat and round, and his lovely form so round and fat! Sing of his comfortable nature, his cuddly ways and his warm, thick purr like boiling oatmeal! Or sing of the many wonderful attributes ascribed to Catnap and of the devotion he inspired. Sing at great length of these, Muse, for there were but three adventures in Catnap's life and I must make much out of little to tell of them.

First of these important episodes was the time he lay down on the fly-paper. Nobody but the new maid would have been so stupid and ignorant as to put the fly-paper where it was; but there was poor Catnap, much surprised and quite awake for once, surveying with startled eyes the loathly sheet adhering so stubbornly to his delicate fur, and accompanying him in his frantic trip around the room. Alcohol was hastily applied in such copious quantities that when the glue was at last soaked off it was a very wet cat that dried himself with his tongue, after the manner of cats. And though Catnap's slumber was habitually deep, it seemed to his Mistress that there was something more than normal in the stupor that followed.

Then there was the day that Catnap found a dead bird under the arbor. He smelt of it, and for some subtle reason decided not to eat it, but a natural histrionic impulse prompted him to take it in his teeth, and head held high, to bear it straight to his Mistress, thereby considerably increasing his prestige as a capable animal.

And lastly, that climatic day when Catnap caught a mouse. It was purely accident, being directly attributable to the fact that the mice had all lost whatever nervousness they might once have had on Catnap's score. For while the mouse—O, unbelievable sauciness!—was eating out of Catnap's own dish it chanced by some curious coincidence that our hero woke, and observing the mouse so close to him, projected a

"A LARGE HOUSE FULL OF PARENTS, NURSES AND CHILDREN"

languid paw upon its back. He did no more than that; and as the novelty of holding down a live mouse soon wore away, Catnap allowing it to escape, subsided once more into the arms of Morpheus. But it was, nevertheless, a genuine conquest; and after this episode his Mistress felt justified in her claim that Catnap scared away the mice.

Thus did Catnap pass a placid existence and thus did Catnip pursue a thrilling career. And it chanced in the old age of both that his first Mistress, learning of Catnip's whereabouts, reclaimed him, hoping thereby to comfort his declining years. She found him quite ready to settle down now, to doze, and wake, and eat, and doze again with Catnap. And feeling philosophical, she said one day: "So here you are, Catnip, for all your exertions, just where you started; and here *you* are, Catnap, with all your laziness, just where you started, too."

THE PATRIMONY

ONCE a good man died, leaving behind him three sons. He had divided his property into three very awkward parts, namely: a fortune, a house and a cat; and as he had on his death-bed expressed a wish that each son should choose the portion he desired, the boys fell to quarrelling immediately, for of course they all wanted the cat.

"Roland is the oldest," said Gerald, sensibly, "so he should inherit the fortune; and Mark is the youngest, therefore he should be provided with a home; so I will take the cat."

"Not so!" cried Mark. "Roland, being the oldest should certainly have the money, and Gerald being the second son must decidedly have the house. I am the youngest and it is proper for me to have the cat."

Roland's argument was plainer. "I," quoth he, doggedly, "am the oldest and should have what I want —which is the cat."

"Let us make the cat decide," suggested Gerald. "The one he loves the most shall take him."

"Very well," replied his brothers, and Gerald took the cat on his knee.

"OF COURSE THEY ALL WANTED THE CAT"

"Only hear him purr!" he cried, triumphantly. "That shows how he loves me." Whereat Mark and Roland, inclining their ears, admitted the fact grudgingly.

"But he's not yours yet," cried Mark, pugnaciously, grabbing the animal. "He's purring for me, too, so there!"

"He's purring loudest for me, so he's mine!" said Roland with determination.

But whether the cat was purring louder than before proved to be a matter of opinion; and as Gerald and Mark did not happen to agree with Roland on that point, they found themselves no nearer a satisfactory decision than before. So after much turbulent dispute, Mark finally suggested that he whom the cat would willingly accompany into the wide world, should be entitled to it.

Accordingly Mark set forth with the cat in his arms and journeyed all day long, by lane and highway, through seven villages and three towns, till at the fall of night he flung himself down by a hay-stack, stroked the cat to sleep and fell asleep himself. When he woke in the morning the cat was gone; and though he called and hunted he could not find it. So he sorrowfully turned his face homeward and journeyed back.

"Alas, alas, Gerald and Roland," he wailed. "I have lost the cat."

"The cat came home," they replied, and the next day Gerald set forth, carrying the cat in his arms. He

journeyed all day long by meadow and copse, through seven villages and three towns and rested at night in a barn, where making the cat a nest in the hay, he fell sound asleep. In the morning the cat was gone and though he called and hunted he could not find it. So he mournfully returned and the cat met him on the doorstep.

The next day Roland set forth with the cat on his shoulder and journeyed all day long by hill and vale, through seven villages and three towns, camping at night in the forest. After wrapping the cat in his coat he went to sleep, and in the morning the cat was gone. Though he called and hunted he could not find it, so he gloomily marched home and there was the cat.

"It's home he loves," said Roland, thoughtfully.

"And his home consists of comfort and the house and us," added Gerald, analytically.

"So we'll all live on the fortune, and in the house, and take care of the cat!" cried Mark, tossing his cap in the air. And so they did.

THE AEGIS OF THE GODS

Once there was a cat and the people worshipped him, but he didn't know it. They builded him an altar of porphyry, filling it with cushions of silk and swan-down, and he slept there because it was so cozy, but he didn't know it belonged to him. He had an attendant to feed him warm goat's milk from an alabaster bowl and sweet lamb's flesh on dishes of carven jade, and to sleek his fur with a jewelled comb, and to fill with scented oil the ever burning lamps upon his altar. Him he thought his master, purring and licking his hand in gratitude, whereat the attendant fell down and worshipped.

At intervals came priests and acolytes with incense and song. They chanted and prayed and prostrated themselves and rose and chanted again, while prophets ranged themselves near the altar ready to interpret the slightest movement of the god-head. Sometimes the cat, watching them, blinked and wondered what they were doing; sometimes, detached and meditative, he washed his face; but in time he got so used to it that he often slept through the whole service, whereat the prophets foretold famine or pestilence. One or both of these evils was sure to come at least once a year, so the prophets were far famed for their powers.

All day long and often during the night, persons would come with their troubles to pray to the cat. Lovers for their sweethearts, parents for their children, children for their toys. Many of these brought offerings; all sorts of things they brought: Ladies would bring their jewels, but the cat was not interested in jewels, and on such occasions paid little or no attention; shepherds would bring honey, but pussy's tooth was not a sweet one. Once a poor boy brought a trout which he had caught in the river. This the cat fell upon devouring, even to the head and the tail; and the boy, who was, in truth, very poor indeed, and who had come to pray for better luck, went away rejoicing. Again, a little girl brought a bangle, which, taking the cat's fancy, he romped with whole-heartedly, much to the child's delight. But for the most part, the people's gifts, showing little insight into the cat-soul, left him unmoved.

One day the cat awoke from a sound sleep to find a little girl stroking it. "Pretty pussy," she said, and laughed. She did not know it was the sacred cat, for she had just come from a far country, so she just murmured "Pretty pussy," and scratched it under the chin. The cat really was a very nice cat, gentle and affectionate and responsive, and very, very beautiful. It was black as night with fur fully four inches long, large amber eyes, velvet paws, and the dewiest cold pink nose. It purred and pawed the cushions with its fore-feet, and looked up into the big sweet eyes of the

little girl and loved the little girl because she so obviously loved it. When she went out of the doorway, the cat came down off the altar and trotted placidly after her through the long corridors till they came to her apartments where she made it a nest of her couch cushions and undid the lacing of her sandal for it to play with; and finally when the sun went down, she curled up on the couch and went sound asleep and the cat curled up at her feet and went to sleep too.

Now there was foul play at the palace. The little girl was a princess and had been brought from far as the sole heir to the old king, whose grand-child she was. But the king had a sister, powerful at court, who wished her son to reign; and she sent armed men to slay the little princess in the dead of night. Stealthily through the halls they came far more of them than was necessary to murder one poor little princess. The foremost lifted the hangings and they all trooped in with a flash of bronze in the torch-light and a subdued clanking of weapons.

But the cat had heard them coming and scented mischief in such stealth. It was not thus that his priests came before him. Not in silence did they come and not with these alarming lights. He knew the priests, anyway, they were all friends of his. But these were strange men approaching in strange fashion. He climbed upon the little princess, his fur abristle, and humping his back, he spread one claw dangerously and spat.

"The sacred cat!" shrieked one, another echoed the cry, and several fell upon their faces with a tremendous clanging of shields and swords. But the officer, a sceptic, stepped forward showering curses and kicks upon the untimely worshippers.

"Scat!" he said, blasphemously and with energy, and that was the last straw. Maddened by the flaming torches and the confusion, and startled by that word delivered with so much gusto, the cat made a wild spring to the officer's shoulders, burying its teeth in his neck. With a howl and in sudden conversion to extreme religious faith, the officer flung off the animal and fled in terror from the apartment, followed by the rest. Panic stricken they made their way to the king's sister to whom they breathlessly related all, adding that it would be dangerous indeed to hurt a hair of the head of one protected in person by so great a god as the sacred cat. To the king's sister, who had been born and bred in cat worship, this advice seemed not only obvious but excellent; and so much was she disturbed by what had passed, that she never further attempted in any way to harm the little princess.

To return to the latter, upon the precipitate departure of her midnight visitors, being little more than startled herself, she recaptured her pussy and spent the rest of the night in endeavoring to calm him; with so little success, however, that upon her dropping into a doze toward morning, he gave her a farewell lick and rub, jumped down from the bed, and trotted back

"THROUGH THE LONG CORRIDORS"

through the halls to that haven of peace and luxury, his altar, whence he made up his cat mind never again to wander. "There's no place like home," he thought to himself as he circled round and round in the cushions, making his nest, after taking a good, deep drink from the alabaster bowl. "Even nice little girls aren't worth the sacrifice of one's home. But she was a *very* nice little girl and I hope she'll come to see me."

She did come very soon—the following day, in fact, this time led in by her attendants to worship and to be instructed in the tenets of that feline creed. But, being a cat lover, she never could forget that this was a pussy-cat in addition to a god, and often stole up to the altar when no one else was near to stroke the celestial back and scratch beneath the most holy chin.

THE SELF MADE KITTEN

At the heart of the slums where the tenth submerges even to the periscope, in an environment as disadvantageous as it is sordid, where kittens have no prospects but the gutter, no heritage but crime, no destiny but death in some obscure alley, a very attractive kitten was born; and if a flower ever bloomed in a bog, that kitten was that flower. "My face is my fortune," said he to himself, and washed it often accordingly. For he was born with a taste for cleanliness and respectability, and early learned to keep his white fur white and his black glossy, to pick his way daintily through the dirty streets, to avoid coal cellars, soot and areas, so that when hardly weaned he was become already the dandy of the quarter. Fastidious in all his ways, unlike his brothers, who would growl over a piece of tainted meat, he used selective art at the garbage-can, rooting with care and discrimination for the more palatable morsels; while to supplement a precarious livelihood he was wont to pilfer discreetly from street vendors, make sly raids on kitchen windows and daily satisfy his hunger by means of a hundred subtleties. Thus did he, in spite of an adverse Fate, preserve health and beauty.

Oft-times how guilefully would he approach the fish-wife,—no crude assault on the basket, nor gusty mewing, but a dexterous clutch and off with the booty, while the old woman would raise an impotent keen for the departed; or perhaps, unaware of her loss, would continue to smooth her apron of bedticking and adjust her perky bonnet. With what caution would the kitten then glide, under cover of a purchaser's skirt, into the dangerous butcher's shop, plucking a fragment of fat or liver when the butcher's back is turned and out of the door with a swift rush; and anon, with what nonchalance would he stalk into the grocery-store, secure in the justification of rats and mice, concentrating for a moment on that crevice behind the flour-barrel: "Poor but honest," murmurs the grocer, turning to a customer, while the kitten hastily consumes a piece of cheese or any other stray tit-bit; and when the grocer looks again, the kitten wears the pure air of detachment of one communing with the infinite. (Here I may add that never in his whole career did he commit the indiscretion of licking his chops.) And then the drunkard's wife, Mrs. Finney, the drunkard, how slovenly of her always to leave the milk out,—just standing in a pan at the window where the sun can sour it and flies can fall in it, and any smart cat can stick a nose in.—Petty larceny! Never! Rather tact, wit and industry.

Now it was the kitten's genteel habit to tidy up every afternoon and go for a walk in some nice resi-

dential quarter of the town, there to bask on a fashionable door-step, to dream of respectability, and to put up as good a pretense as possible of being somebody's pet cat. And it came to pass one day as he sat thus, paws tucked under him, tail curled neatly round, as clean and presentable a kitten as you would wish to see, albeit thin, that a little, dark man passing by did actually take him for that imaginary person's pet, kidnapped him accordingly, and sold him for a very small coin to another dark man owning a few large cages full of cats of every size and color.

Far from struggling to escape, the kitten was delighted at the change, for his was a precocious wisdom, and he saw bright potentialities in this new way of life. "Opportunity never knocks twice," thought he, and with stoical self-control resigned his lean little body to the dark hands that washed, dried and combed. What amply repaid him for these distasteful ablutions was the food, wholesome and sufficient, which always appeared soon after hunger, lowered to the feline vision by those same dark hands: "What lovely swill," was the kitten's inward comment, when, on the evening of the first day, the plates descended. "Manna!" fervently ejaculated an elderly puss, erstwhile rat-catcher to a curate.

The kitten made the most of his meals, and perceiving no cause for haste, the other cats being identically engaged, chewed well and digested tranquilly, growing fatter and sleeker daily, so that he soon drew the at-

"KIDNAPPED HIM ACCORDINGLY"

tention of the rest by his comely appearance and manifest health. Had he been of a responsive disposition he might easily have been the friend of every cat in the cage; but like many endowed with the instinct for success and advancement, he was also secretive and aloof, absorbing himself in the business of eating, sleeping and resting, with just enough exercise to keep in trim.

Thus did a year pass, at the end of which time it was perceived of the dark man, that here indeed was a very handsome cat, worthy to be sent to the Cat and Dog Show; so, entering him under the name of Prince, he packed him off to the Madison Square Gardens, where, to make a long story short, our hero found himself in very cramped quarters, thick with zoological smells and lined with unsympathetic straw. The physical discomfort, the deafening cries of his neighbors and the tramp of human hundreds confused Prince at first; but his instincts speedily came to the rescue: "It's an ill wind that blows *me* no good," thought he, and arranging himself in as becoming an attitude as was compatible with the size of the cage, he ogled all who passed, so that an appreciative crowd gathered before the bars. When the prizes were awarded a blue ribbon went to Prince as the best specimen of a common cat; and on the strength of it a purchaser was found in the shape of a wealthy spinster, who payed a large sum for him and bore him to her home.

And now forsooth was his fortune made. The

spinster exhibited him to all her friends with the caption: "Blood will tell!" With slavish devotion herself prepared his frequent snacks of chopped meat, chicken or liver. Never did she forget his bowl of warm milk at breakfast or his saucer of cream at tea. He was frequently but painlessly combed by this affectionate woman; and whenever he disposed himself on the brocaded cushions of the drawing-room, with what admiration would she exclaim: "To the manner born!"

"Well, here I am at last," thought Prince with a sigh of satisfaction, for he knew that the struggle was over. Obstacles overcome, heights scaled, ambition realized, he, a self-made kitten, surveyed proudly the past, placidly the future. His birth remained a secret in the circles where he now moved, for no coarse gesture of his nor accent of the slums ever disturbed that surface of worldly grace to betray his humble origin.

THE KITTEN'S TAILOR

Once there was a young tailor's apprentice with blue eyes and brown hair, who in due time became a tailor, and delightedly acquired a small shop of his own, with a green door and a shiny window and a real sign outside in red and gold. Inside this establishment were a small room with a counter, and a still smaller room with a shelf. And here when the day arrived came the tailor with a kitten and a thimble; and having arranged upon the shelf the mug and plate that were his, and the bowl that was the kitten's, he composed himself to wait for a customer.

It was not long before one came,—a very grand gentleman,—and the tailor's heart gave an important throb as he hurried in to take his first order. There was a fine suit to make, of white satin and silver lace, and the gentleman was eager to have it the day after next. So when he was gone, down sat the tailor to his work, and down sat the kitten beside him.

While his master was busy snipping, the kitten played with the thimble; what mattered it, since the tailor was not using it then? And when he finally needed it, the thimble was soon found. But when the young man began to sew, he could not help wishing

that the kitten would not squeeze quite so close to his right elbow, though the little creature obviously sat there because of a very flattering interest in the work.

In fact, from time to time it would reach out a tentative paw towards the long thread with which the tailor was stitching. But the latter always managed to elude it until—quite suddenly—the kitten made a little lunge, caught the thread, and gave it such a pull that the seam puckered and the tailor must rip out and start afresh. Upon a repetition of this offense, he removed the animal to the back room. But there the kitten felt so lonely and wailed so piteously that the tailor let him in again, rebuking it, however, with: "Crumpet, be good!" Whereat the kitten sat down at a little distance from the tailor and looked wistfully at the thread.

Noticing the disconsolate air of the kitten, the tailor tossed it an empty spool; and while Crumpet played, the young man worked on busily, letting his thoughts wander to the baker's daughter, who, for some inexplicable reason, refused to marry him. He had gone to see her only the day before, hoping that since he was become a real tailor with a new shop,—and such a nice one,—she would at last accept his proposals. But, though she admitted her love for him, she still refused, and he came away disappointed and puzzled.

The young man was soon roused from these thoughts by sounds from the table; and looking up, discovered to his excessive annoyance that Crumpet, hav-

ing unwound a skein of silk, was at the moment engaged in tangling the silver lace. Dodging the now almost angry tailor with mischievous agility, the kitten sprang to the bale of white satin, swiftly sharpened its claws therein, and then rolled over on its back with disarming coyness, batting a derisive paw at his friend. But, steeling his heart, the latter opened the shop door, and depositing Crumpet with all possible gentleness in the street without, he returned hastily to his work. But as the day was chilly, Crumpet clambered onto the window-ledge, mewing sadly and pressing an impotent little nose against the pane; so that the tailor, conscience-stricken, opened the door and recalled the kitten, who charged in wildly, and then, recollecting itself, halted just in time to wash its face. After which, with an air of virtuous reform, it curled up in a corner and went to sleep.

The tailor surveyed his work. The suit was indeed barely started, owing to constant interruptions; and when he considered the bale of satin, pricked and pulled by the naughty claws, the silk hopelessly snarled, the silver lace torn and bitten, he was forced to admit that not much but damage had been done that morning. And as it was now noon, he left his work, laid out the mug, the plate and the bowl, and summoned Crumpet. Together they ate their meal of bread and milk, then speedily set to work again, the tailor endeavoring to make up for the loss of the morning, the kitten slyly rooting in the button-box, which,

of course, soon upset, and cost the poor man some thirty minutes of angry grubbing.

During the remainder of the day the kitten was expelled from the room four times and four times recalled in recognition of its hearty protests. Its offenses were varied, for it distributed its attentions impartially among the spools, the scissors and the beeswax, which last it evidently fancied edible, chewing it up very small and spitting it out disappointedly with much coughing and choking, thereby causing the tailor no little anxiety for its windpipe. The tray of pins that the tailor always kept within convenient reach, was soon overturned, and the contents scattered far and wide. Indeed, if there had been six little kittens, the pins could not have been scattered further, for the tailor found them in the furthest recesses of the room.

It is hard to punish a fat little kitten—"And that kitten an orphan!" so thought the tailor with a sympathetic pang. And the end of the day found a very discouraged young man and a no very chastened puss. And as the occurrences of the first day were repeated on the next, it is easy to see that the suit was not nearly ready when the fine gentleman called for it. Excuses were in vain; abuse was heaped on the head of the poor tailor, and the gentleman stormed himself off.

That evening the tailor faced the facts with a serious mind, and after a small struggle with himself, decided to give up the thought of being a tailor; and as a grocery is a pleasant place for a kitten, being always

warm and full of amusement, he determined to turn grocer. Acting on this resolution, he sought out his uncle who owned a large grocery-store in the next street. "Splendid!" cried the old man, upon hearing the tailor's plan. "I have long been wanting a partner in my business, and who could be a fitter one than my own nephew?"

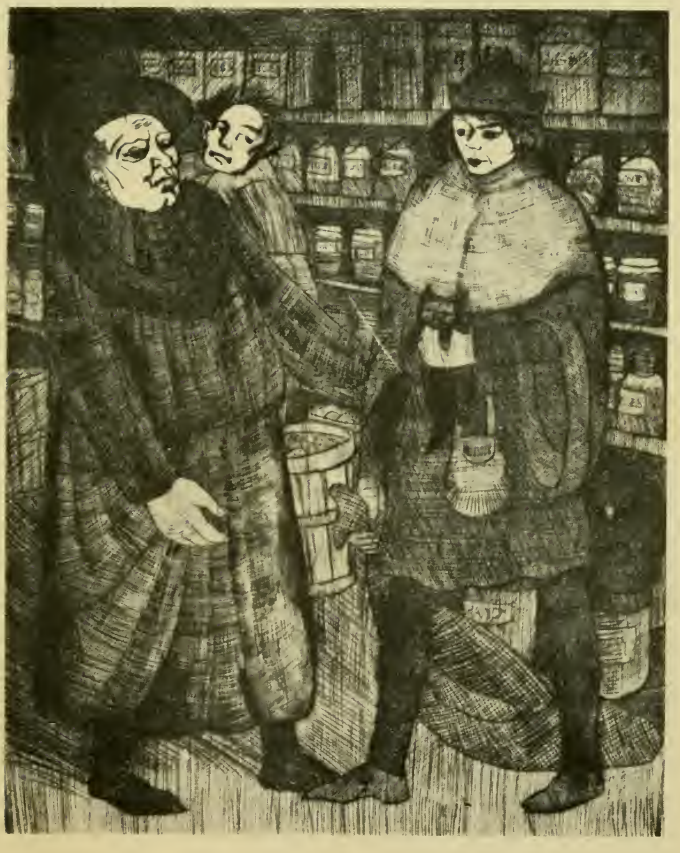
And so the young tailor became a young grocer, and he and the kitten went to live in the grocery store. As they were both very fond of cheese, they easily reconciled themselves to the change, and very comfortable they were to be sure. Crumpet could sleep on the flour bags, on the counter, in the sunny window, or in his own soft basket behind the stove, and he soon cultivated a taste for dried fish. There were plenty of potatoes and walnuts for him to play with, and as he grew older he learned to appreciate the rats and mice.

As for the tailor, or rather the grocer, he presently plucked up courage to ask again for the plump hand of the baker's daughter, and this time to his great joy it was not denied him. "Now that you are a grocer, my love," cried she, "I have no objections at all; but I would never marry a tailor. To sit like a Turk is undignified and barbarous, and I have heard it makes them bowlegged." And so they were married.

SCAT

ONCE there was a young man who helped himself liberally to the good things of this world. His helpings were indeed so copious that he might well have lost appetite and enthusiasm; but no more flourishing than he the gardenia in his buttonhole, no lighter than his heart his step. No meddlesome relatives, no tiresome duties, no troublesome pets; instead, health, wealth and freedom,—in fact, a thoroughly eligible young man who was wont to let himself into his own handsome house with a latch-key quite late every night.

But no one's life is entirely free from trouble, and there was one thing that proved a constant source of exasperation to him. A loathly cat in the neighborhood had decided to take up her abode with him. She was determined. Nothing could stop her, the dingy thing! She would wait at the front door of a morning till he made his exit, fawn upon him, follow him mewing for a block or so, lacing dangerously back and forth across his feet. He kicked her, but she mistook it for playfulness. He cried "Scat!"—she thought it was her name. When he returned at night she never failed to lurk in the shadows, and dart in as the door



"HE AND THE KITTEN WENT TO LIVE IN THE GROCERY STORE"

was opened; and it was always long e'er he could find and eject her. Thus passed a spring, a summer, a fall, and still was she his indefatigable torment.

And now a bitter season was suddenly come: fourteen below zero, blizzards and a shortage of coal. Outdoors, glaciers; indoors, cold storage. So that even the eligible one felt the nipping cold as his numbed fingers fumbled with the lock. Scat, as usual, squeezed into the house in spite of his frantic efforts. Angrily he captured her, but felt a pleasant sensation steal over him as his hands came into contact with the furry animal. Though Scat probably did not feel very warm to herself, her temperature was in agreeable contrast to that of the night-air and the door-knob. A sudden whim for petting her seized the young man. She purred. Closing the door he bore her to the library and there for a long time held her, stroked her, and incidentally warmed his hands.

From that time on she became one of the accepted comforts of life. Her status for awhile was peculiar, something between a muff and a hot-water-bottle; and in this joint capacity she made herself indispensable. That devotion to himself which had erstwhile been so tedious was now her great asset in her master's eyes; and with what satisfaction did he welcome her cozy attentions during those heatless weeks. A home and food soon wrought wonders in her looks. She proved when the soot wore off to be a pure white cat with thick fur, yellow eyes, and (it need hardly be said) an

affectionate disposition. The young man called her Ermintrude, a composite name, "ermine" suggesting her appearance, "intrude" her propensities. By the time the cold had abated she was firmly established in the household, and it would never have occurred to anyone that her presence was no longer necessary. Such, forsooth, was by no means the case, for a certain change had come over her master also.

He had taken to tea and buttered toast, and often would return at five o'clock to partake of that homely meal by the fireside. Ermintrude had cream in a saucer, and her master was occasionally observed to go without it in his second cup that she might have more. He had also taken to spending the evenings at home,—not all the evenings, but some of them; and, to his own great embarrassment, was one day discovered by a derisive friend reading a book with Ermintrude beside him. When Ermintrude produced a family of kittens the house was turned upside down for her comfort, and great was the young man's agitation over a kitten that would not nurse. He saw to it that the kittens' basket was kept warm, and when the little creatures were at play, took great care to protect them from draughts. He never allowed anyone else to handle them, and was so firm on this point that several people felt quite insulted. When in due season Ermintrude weaned them, he experienced sympathetic pangs for the kittens and a certain disappointment in Ermintrude, though his reason told him that

"STOUTLY MAINTAINED WITH TEARS IN HER EYES"

all was as it should be. When the kittens grew up he refused to part with any of them, in spite of much unsolicited advice. His friends jeeringly called him "a family man"; and as he grew more domestic he became in the eyes of the world, strange to say, less eligible, and received far fewer invitations to week-end parties. In short, he was considered a great failure by everyone save his housekeeper, who stoutly maintained with tears in her eyes that Ermintrude had been the making of him.